



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

ROGER BERLINER
COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT

CHAIR, TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE,
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

August 25, 2011

Mr. Isiah Leggett
County Executive
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear County ~~Executive~~ ^{Ike} Leggett,

I am writing to request your support to expand our County's commitment to a robust bikeshare program, including, but not limited to, the Bethesda metro stations.

You may be aware of the growing interest in establishing a bikeshare program in the Bethesda area of our County. The District of Columbia and Arlington launched their bikeshare programs one year ago to great fanfare, and they have experienced tremendous growth in participation since their start in September 2010. Indeed, just last month the District's Department of Transportation announced the addition of 32 new stations, and Arlington added four new stations this past April.

I was pleased to learn that our County, in partnership with the City of Rockville, secured a grant from the National Transportation Planning Board to establish a bikesharing pilot in Rockville and Gaithersburg to provide linkages to home and employment sites for low-income residents. This is a positive development and your staff is to be commended for their hard work in securing this grant.

However, I believe you would agree that Montgomery County can – and should – do more to provide bikesharing to our residents. I am grateful that your staff at the Montgomery County Department of Transportation pursued funding to bring a bikeshare system to our county through federal TIGER grants. However, the fact remains that Montgomery County is currently missing out on the opportunity to participate in this important effort to relieve congestion by cutting down on vehicle trips, reduce carbon emissions, and provide another option for our residents to get to work or run errands, or, just as important, to exercise.

I believe the Bethesda area is particularly well-situated for expanding our bikesharing system. With its high metro ridership¹, proximity to existing bikeshare stations, and already congested roads, I believe conditions are such that a network of stations would serve our constituents there quite well. In fact, I am aware that the Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board recently expressed their interest in bikeshare in a letter to you dated August 8. I have also spoken with members of the Bethesda business community, the Bethesda Urban Partnership, and the Director of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center and all agree that Bethesda would benefit tremendously from bikeshare. In addition, I know you are aware that the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) taking place at the National Naval Medical Center is expected to generate 500,000 new trips to the area. A bikeshare network could provide additional mode share towards mitigating the traffic impacts related to BRAC. Moreover, I believe you share my enthusiasm for the potential of the White Flint area as the recently passed White Flint Sector Plan is implemented. A bikeshare station there could be the missing link

¹ Ridership at the Red Line metro stations in this area – Friendship Heights, Bethesda, and Medical Center – has grown by 71%, 114%, and 94%, respectively, since their openings. Ridership has grown faster at these stations than nearly any of the other metro stations in Montgomery County.

<http://www.wmata.com/pdfs/planning/FINAL%20Transit%20Ridership%20and%20Market%20Trends%20Report.pdf>

between the Bethesda-area network and the stations already going in in Rockville, and fits well with the transit-oriented nature of the redevelopment taking place in White Flint.

As I said, I am aware that DOT staff has previously applied for funding grants that could bring a bikeshare system to the County, and that they recently traveled to Annapolis to discuss Montgomery County's outlook for securing a bikeshare program with state officials and members of the Bethesda community. I am grateful for these efforts. But I believe the time is now to infuse a renewed sense of urgency into our pursuit of a bikeshare system that expands on our successful efforts in securing the pilot program in Rockville and Gaithersburg. You may be aware that Senator Brian Frosh, who represents Bethesda in the Maryland General Assembly, has already expressed his strong support in securing state bond bill funding for such an endeavor. Combined with the growing enthusiasm in the Bethesda community, Senator Frosh's commitment to assist with funding creates a more optimistic outlook for making bikesharing a reality in Montgomery County.

As Chair of the Council's Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy, and Environment (T&E) Committee, I have scheduled a discussion of bikesharing later this fall. In the meantime, I would like to meet with the appropriate members of your staff to discuss strategies for funding and implementing a bikeshare program. These strategies could include, but of course are not limited to, a County match of possible state bond bill funding and/or collaborations with the private sector in some sort of sponsorship model. My hope is that following this meeting or meetings, we will have formulated an executable plan that establishes bikeshare in the Bethesda area in the very near future.

Thank you for your continued interest in this exciting opportunity to serve our residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Roger Berliner", written in a cursive style.

Roger Berliner
Chair, T&E Committee
District 1

CC: Senator Brian Frosh
Valerie Ervin, County Council President
Nancy Floreen, Member, Council T&E Committee
Hans Reimer, Member, Council T&E Committee
Art Holmes, Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Al Roshdieh, Deputy Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Sandra Brecher, Chief, Commuter Services, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Ken Hartman, Director, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center
David Dabney, Director, Bethesda Urban Partnership
Phil Alperson, Montgomery County BRAC Coordinator
Jeff Hearle, Chair, Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board
Ginanne Italiano, Chair, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce
Rollin Stanley, Director, Montgomery County Planning Department
François Carrier, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
Glenn Orlin, Deputy Staff Director, County Council



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

September 16, 2011

TO: Roger Berliner, Vice President
Montgomery County Council

FROM: Isiah Leggett, County Executive

**Original signed by
Isiah Leggett**

SUBJECT: Bikeshare program

Thank you for your letter dated August 25, 2011, regarding your interest in seeing bikesharing expanded in Montgomery County. We agree that bikesharing is a key component of our efforts to increase availability of non-auto alternatives to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. To date, we have pursued every opportunity to expand bikesharing in the County and welcome your support as we continue to do so.

As you note in your letter, our Department of Transportation (MCDOT) has been very proactive in seeking funding to enable expansion of bikesharing throughout the County. Several grant applications have been submitted for that purpose, including two which would have provided bikesharing throughout the downcounty along both legs of Metro's Red Line, including Friendship Heights, Bethesda, and the Medical Center along the west leg, and Takoma Park, Silver Spring, and Forest Glen along the east leg. Unfortunately, those grant applications were not funded, but providing bikesharing in that area remains a high priority of MCDOT, and they have continued to work toward that goal.

Recently MCDOT was successful in obtaining a federal grant piloting bikesharing to link low income and reverse commuters with jobs in the Rockville and Shady Grove areas. Use of the bikesharing system in those areas will not be limited to grant-eligible participants, however. All residents and employees traveling in that area will be able to use bikesharing as a link between transit and jobs. The system will connect those two Metro stations with worksites and activity centers, and will support the County's vision for the Great Seneca Science Corridor, including the Life Sciences Center. Residents from other parts of the County traveling for work or other purposes to the Rockville/Shady Grove area, including residents of Bethesda, will directly benefit from the improved access afforded by this bikesharing program.

The most significant barrier to greater expansion of bikesharing in the County is the financial commitment it entails. Each bikesharing station requires approximately \$50,000 in capital funding and about \$25,000 annually in operating expenses. While some of the operating expenses can be offset by memberships and user fees, projections indicate it will take several

Roger Berliner
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years to reach the point where revenues substantially off-set expenses, and it is possible other sources such as sponsorships and advertising fees will be needed to achieve the required revenue stream. Given the County's current fiscal situation, our approach has been to seek outside funding sources in the form of grants and/or private sector support, leveraging limited fiscal resources to provide bikesharing in the most cost-effective manner possible.

With that in mind, members of the MCDOT staff recently met with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and staff from the Governor's office to represent the County in a discussion of options for state funding of bikesharing. Also attending that meeting were Senator Brian Frosh, representatives of the City of Takoma Park and the Bethesda community, and representatives of other jurisdictions in the state. MDOT indicated they are working on a grant program to provide for state allocation of federal funds to assist local jurisdictions with bikesharing, details of which should be forthcoming this fall. I also am aware that Senator Frosh has expressed his interest in supporting a bond bill in the General Assembly to help fund local efforts.

To capitalize on any of these potential programs, funds from local sources will be essential, both to match capital grants (probably requiring a 20 percent match) and for operating subsidies. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss alternative strategies to bridge that funding gap so that bikesharing can be provided throughout the downcounty area. Staff from the MCDOT Director's Office will be in touch with you soon to arrange such a meeting for that purpose.

Thank you for your support of the County's efforts to expand transportation alternatives through bikesharing.

IL:kmm

cc: Senator Brian Frosh

Valerie Ervin, County Council President

Nancy Floreen, Member, Council T&E Committee

Hans Riemer, Member, Council T&E Committee

Arthur Holmes, Jr. Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation

Al Roshdieh, Deputy Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation

Sandra Brecher, Chief, Commuter Services, Montgomery County Department of Transportation

Ken Hartman, Director, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center

David Dabney, Director, Bethesda Urban Partnership

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